



Das Kaffeehaus als Wurzel allen Übels? Søren Kierkegaard und Hubert L. Dreyfus über ein Zeitalter der Tatenlosigkeit, des Geredes und einer Öffentlichkeit die sich in Dummheiten verliert anstatt ein menschliches Miteinander zu pflegen.

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Realität: Kaffeehäuser und Massenmedien stehen unter Verdacht von der Wirklichkeit abzulenken und irrationale Ängste auszulösen.

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3D Grafik Internetcafé
Quelle: Internet

Berthold Viertel
Die Zuflucht der impotenten Lumpen

1908

Ich habe vorige Woche das Central verlassen, endgültig verlassen. ... Im Café ist niemand ein Mensch, und dort jemanden kennen zu lernen, welch kolossaler Aufwand an Zeit und Kraft. Setze vier Menschen in ein Zimmer, sperr die Türe zu und überlasse sie ihrem Schicksal. Jetzt müssen sie miteinander auskommen, einander die Zeit vertreiben. Und sie werden ihren Geist, ihre Laune, ihr Wissen auskrämen. Im Café aber – da ist ein Gewimmel, ein Leben, ein Theater ... Im Café gibt es keinen Geist, keine Laune, kein Wissen. Dort regiert einzig und allein Majestät Spleen. ... Das Café tötet die Freundschaften und die Feindschaften, ein demoralisierendes Nebeneinanderhocken, eine traurige Kameradschaft im Schwachsinn. Das Café würfelt die Stände in unordentlicher Weise zusammen. Es ist der Platz des Hochstaplertums. Ein Mensch, in unserem Zimmer sofort durchschaut, vermag uns im Café tagelang an der Nase herumzuführen. Das Café ist die Zuflucht der impotenten Lumpen. ... Im Café handelt niemand, aber jeder spricht.

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Scan:
Aus "Das Wiener Kaffeehaus".
Herausgegeben von Kurt-Jürgen
Heering. Erschienen im insel

Das Internet: Ort größtmöglicher Wahrheit oder Hort der Lügner und Trolle? Textempfehlung des Tages: *"Trustworthiness and Truth: The Epistemic Pitfalls of Internet Accountability"* von Karen Frost-Arnold.

A public is neither a nation, nor a generation, nor a community, nor a society, nor these particular men, for all these are only what they are through the concrete; no single person who belongs to the Public makes a real commitment." As we shall see, this is the sense in which the Public and the Press make Christianity impossible. More basically still, that the Public Sphere lies outside political power so that anyone can hold an opinion on anything without having to act on it, opens up the possibility of endless reflection. If there is no possibility of decision and action, one can look at all things from all sides and always find some new perspective from which to put everything into question again. Kierkegaard saw, when everything is up for endless critical commentary, action finally becomes impossible. "[A]t any moment reflection is capable of explaining everything quite differently and allowing one some way of escape...". He is therefore clear that "reflection by transforming the capacity for action into a means of escape from action, is both corrupt and dangerous...". **"The Press is an abstraction (since a newspaper is not a concrete part of a nation and only in an abstract sense an individual) which in conjunction with the passionless and reflective character of the age produces that abstract phantom: a public which in its turn is really the leveling power"**.

Kierkegaard could have been speaking of the Internet when he said of the Press, "[i]t is frightful that someone who is no one...can set any error into circulation with no thought of responsibility and with the aid of this dreadful disproportioned means of communication." Such commentators do not take a stand on the issues they speak about.

Ever sensitive to his own position as a speaker, Kierkegaard concluded his analysis of the dangers of the present age and his dark predictions of what was ahead for Europe with the ironic remark that: "In our times, when so little is done, an extraordinary number of prophecies, apocalypses, glances at and studies of the future appear, and there is nothing to do but to join in and be one with the rest". The person in the aesthetic sphere keeps open all possibilities and has no fixed identity that could be threatened by disappointment, humiliation or loss. On the Internet, "we are encouraged to think of ourselves as fluid, emergent, decentralized, multiplicitous, flexible, and ever in process," she tells us. Thus "the Internet has become a significant social laboratory for experimenting with the constructions and reconstructions of self that characterize postmodern life." Chat rooms lend themselves to the possibility of playing at being many selves, none of whom is recognized as who one truly is, and this possibility is not just theoretical but actually introduces new social practices. Turkle tells us that: **"The rethinking of human...identity is not taking place just among philosophers but on the ground, through a philosophy in everyday life that is in some measure both proved and carried by the computer presence."**



In The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere Jürgen Habermas locates the beginning of what he calls the Public Sphere in the middle of the eighteenth century. He explains that, at that time, the Press and coffee houses became the locus of a new form of political discussion. This new sphere of discourse is radically different from the ancient polis or republic; the modern Public Sphere understands itself as being outside political power.



Kierkegaard held that if one threw oneself into the aesthetic sphere with total commitment it was bound to break down under the sheer glut of information and possibilities. With no way of telling the relevant from the irrelevant and the significance from the insignificant everything becomes equally interesting and equally boring. Writing from the perspective of someone experiencing the melancholy that signals the breakdown of the aesthetic sphere he laments: "My reflection on life altogether lacks meaning. I take it some evil spirit has put a pair of spectacles on my nose, one glass of which magnifies to an enormous degree, while the other reduces to the same degree." This inability to distinguish the trivial from the important eventually stops being thrilling and leads to the very boredom the aesthete and net surfer have dedicated their lives to avoiding. That higher form of existence Kierkegaard calls the ethical sphere. In it one has a stable identity and is committed to involved action. Information is not denigrated but is sought and used for serious purposes. As long as information gathering is not an end in itself, whatever reliable information there is on the Web can be a valuable resource. It can serve serious commitments. Such commitments require that people have life plans and take up serious tasks. They then have goals that determine what needs to be done and what information is relevant for doing it. Can the Net support this life of committed action?

But Kierkegaard would respond that the very ease of making choices on the Internet would ultimately lead to the inevitable breakdown of serious choice and so of the ethical sphere. Commitments that are freely chosen can and should be revised from minute to minute as new information comes along. **But where there is no risk and every commitment can be revoked without consequences, choice becomes arbitrary and meaningless.** The ethical person responds to this breakdown by trying to choose which commitments are the most important ones. This choice is based on a more fundamental choice of what is worthy and not worthy, what good and what evil.

Like a simulator, the Net manages to capture everything but the risk. Our imaginations can be drawn in, as they are in playing games and watching movies, and no doubt game simulations sharpen our responses for non-game situations, but so far as games work by capturing our imaginations, they will fail to give us serious commitments. Imagined commitments hold us only when our imaginations are captivated by the simulations before our ears and eyes. As Kierkegaard says of the present age, "It transforms the real task into an unreal trick and reality into a play" Thus Kierkegaard is right, the Press and the Internet are the ultimate enemy of the unconditional commitment which is the basis of Christianity. Only this highest religious sphere of existence can save us from the leveling launched by the Enlightenment and perfected in the Press and the Public Sphere.

Note: Dreyfus makes a simplified assessment of the Net that should be rethought with the text *"Trustworthiness and Truth: The Epistemic Pitfalls of Internet Accountability"* by Karen Frost-Arnold in mind.



Stills from "Citizen Kane" by George Orwell. The scene with Mrs. and Mr. Kane reading newspaper marks the end of a short summary of their marriage which started out with the couple being close to each other and ends with them sitting far apart reading newspaper instead of talking. They are now not even fighting anymore.

"In a free country, every man thinks he has a concern in all public matters." This is seen by Habermas as a triumph of democratization but Kierkegaard saw that the Public Sphere was destined to become a realm of idle talk in which spectators merely pass the word along. In fact, however, "The Present Age" shows just how original Kierkegaard was. While Tocqueville and Mill claimed that the masses needed elite philosophical leadership and, while Habermas agrees with them that what happens around 1850 with the democratization of the Public Sphere by the daily press is an unfortunate decline into conformism from which the Public Sphere must be saved, Kierkegaard sees the Public Sphere as a new and dangerous cultural phenomenon in which the leveling produced by the Press brings out something that was deeply wrong with the Enlightenment idea of detached reflection from the start. Thus, while Habermas is concerned to recapture the moral and political virtues of the Public Sphere, Kierkegaard brilliantly sees that there is no way to salvage the Public Sphere since, unlike concrete groups and crowds, it was from the start the source of leveling. This leveling was produced in several ways. First, the new massive distribution of desituated information was making every sort of information immediately available to anyone, thereby producing a desituated, detached spectator. The new power of the Press to disseminate information to everyone in a nation led its readers to transcend their local, personal involvement and overcome their reticence about what did not directly concern them. Since the members of the Public being outside political power take no stand, the Public Sphere, through the Press, removes all seriousness from human action so that, at the limit, the Press becomes a voyeuristic form of irresponsible amusement that enjoys the undermining of "outstanding individuals." If we imagine the Press growing weaker and weaker because no events or ideas catch hold of the age, the more easily will the process of leveling become a harmful pleasure. More and more individuals, owing to their bloodless indolence, will aspire to be nothing at all - in order to become the Public: that abstract whole formed in the most ludicrous way, by all participants becoming a third-party [an onlooker]...This gallery is on the look-out for distraction and soon abandons itself to the idea that everything that any one does is done in order to give it [the Public] something to gossip about. For Kierkegaard the deeper danger is just what Habermas applauds about the Public Sphere, viz., as Kierkegaard puts it, "[A] public... destroys everything that is relative, concrete and particular in life". The Public Sphere thus promotes ubiquitous commentators who deliberately detach themselves from the local practices out of which specific issues grow and in terms of which these issues must be resolved through some sort of committed action. What seems a virtue to detached Enlightenment reason, therefore, looks like a disastrous drawback to Kierkegaard. The Public Sphere is a world in which everyone has an opinion on, and comments on, all public matters without needing any first-hand experience and without having or wanting any responsibility.

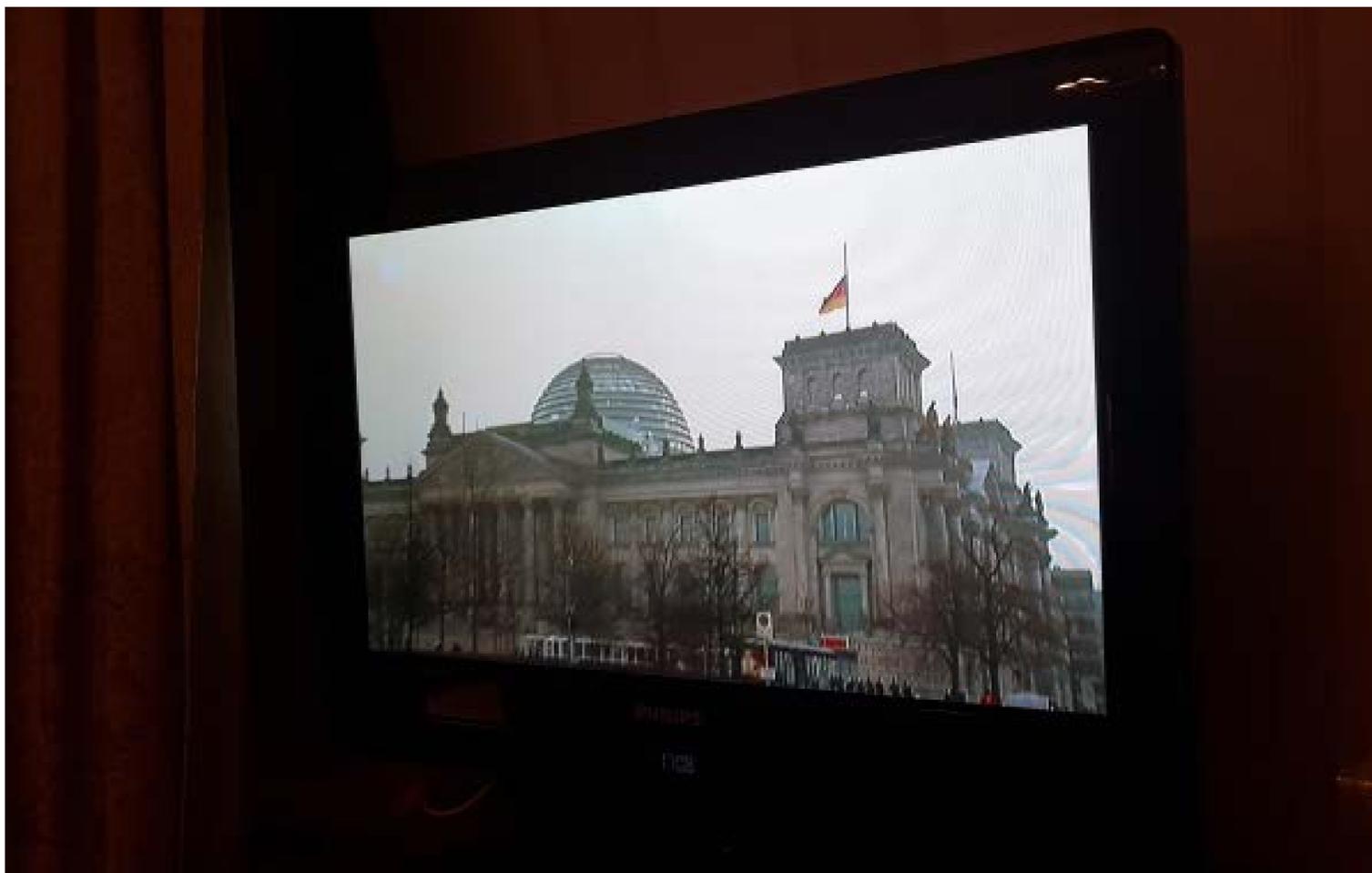


Künstler fotografiert potentiell harmlose LKW´s zwischen Berlin und Leipzig. Warum? Als **Gegenrealität** zu sich häufenden Berichten über Lastwägen die in Anschläge verwickelt wurden. **Fotostrecke auf Seite 2 bis 4.**



Die sog. "Lügenpresse" steht im Endeffekt auf der Seite derer die diese als solche bezeichnen? Angeblich "linke" Berichterstattung unterstützt in Wirklichkeit "rechts"!

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Ein Fernsehgerät aus Perspektive eines Betrachters. Das Bild als konstruierte Realität im Rahmen des Geräts. Können wir noch unterscheiden vom Narrativ der Medien, von den Kanons der Öffentlichen Meinung und unserer eigenen Einstellung zum Leben und unserem Umfeld? Ihre Meinung ist gefragt. **Ab Seite 4**

Fernsehnachrichten sind Angst-Narrative.

Öffentlichkeit reagiert gespalten. Rechte Gruppierungen gewinnen an Zuwachs. Gewichtung und Art der Berichterstattung können dafür mitverantwortlich sein. Mißtrauen gegenüber Staat und Presse historisch veranlagt. Maßnahmen zur Verständigung sollen abseits der Massenmedien stattfinden. Eignet sich nun möglicherweise die Kunst?

Buchtipps: Charlotte Klonk
Terror Wenn Bilder zu Waffen werden. Erschienen bei S. Fischer

Fernsehprogramm:
Lastwagenspecial und Realitätsebenen. Dopplungen und Duelle, Zapping als Narrativ. Die Summe der Eindrücke. Stroboskop und Kaffeehaus, Film und Wirklichkeit.



Video Still





